

North Atlantic Right Whale Sighting Survey (NARWSS)  
and  
Sighting Advisory System (SAS)

2004 Results Summary

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OVERVIEW: The North Atlantic Right Whale Sighting Survey (NARWSS) is a NOAA Fisheries program dedicated to locating and recording the seasonal distribution of right whales off the northeastern United States. The Sighting Advisory System (SAS) is designed to reduce collisions between ships and right whales by alerting mariners to the presence of these whales via fax, email, the internet, Broadcast Notice to Mariners (BNM), NOAA Weather Radio, and the Mandatory Ship Reporting system (MSR). These reports are obtained from a variety of sources including the NARWSS, whale watches, Coast Guard, fishing vessels, commercial ships, and the general public. The results of both programs' efforts in 2004 are summarized in the following tables and figures.

NARWSS TABLE 1: Summarizes the number of flight hours completed in each month that the surveys were conducted by NARWSS during 2004. There were four primary types of surveys flown: broadscale, focused surveys in the Great South Channel (GSC) Critical Habitat, focused surveys over potential and realized Dynamic Area Management (DAM) closure zones, and focused surveys in a designated Navy bombing range referred to as W-104B. Broadscale surveys were flown along systematic east-west tracklines that covered all Federal waters west of the Hague Line from south of Long Island, New York, to Eastport, Maine. These surveys were flown to provide a synoptic view of right whale distribution; a completed series indicates coverage of the entire area. Surveys focused on the GSC served the dual purpose of providing relatively current locations of right whale aggregations to commercial shipping traffic and high photographic recapture rates of individuals for vital rate models of the population. DAM confirmation flights included flights made to investigate reported sightings of right whale aggregations outside existing closures, as well as monitoring aggregations' duration of residence within established DAM zones. Focused surveys in W-104B were conducted by NARWSS in cooperation with the Navy prior to scheduled bombing exercises to determine the presence or absence of marine mammals and sea turtles. Additional focused flights not categorized in the table were flights to relocate reported whale carcasses or to confirm reported right whale sightings in Nantucket Sound and New York Harbor.

NARWSS FIGURE 1: Summarizes all NARWSS survey tracklines (thin lines) and right whale sighting locations (bullseyes) for 2004. Seasonal right whale closure areas in effect during each period are shown as bold lines. The duration for each closure area is as follows: Cape Cod Bay Jan 1<sup>st</sup> - May 15<sup>th</sup>; Great South Channel April 1<sup>st</sup> - June 30<sup>th</sup>; Seasonal Area Management (SAM) West March 1<sup>st</sup> - April 30<sup>th</sup>; Seasonal Area Management (SAM) East May 1<sup>st</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>.

SAS TABLE 1: Summarizes the number of reports broken down by reporting source and notes all late and unconfirmed reports. Unconfirmed reports did not produce an alert. Late reports generated an alert if it was likely the location would continue to be occupied by right whales. Often sightings were combined into a single alert. A total of 113 alerts were broadcasted in 2004.

SAS FIGURE 1a: Illustrates the total number of reports received by source for each month of 2004 covering all sightings from Maine through New York. SAS FIGURE 1b shows the same for all sightings from New Jersey through North Carolina.

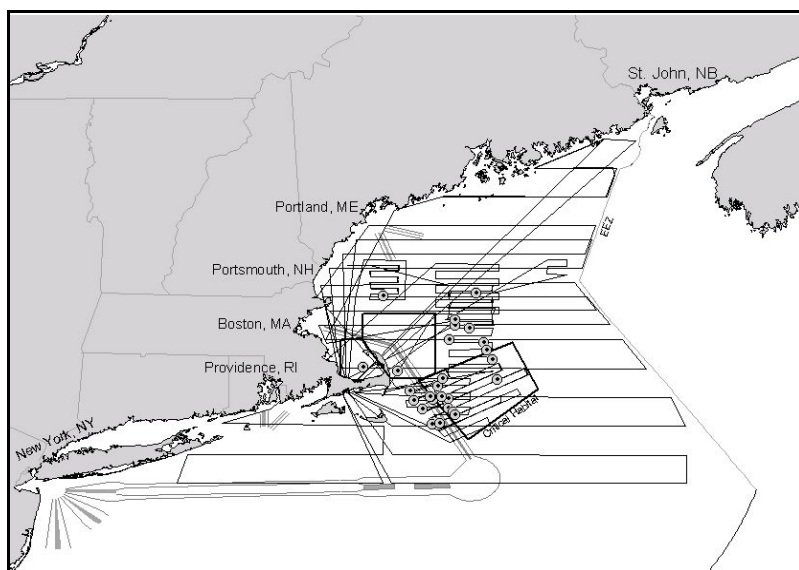
SAS FIGURE 2: Plots all sightings received by the SAS in 2004 in the northeast region, excluding unconfirmed reports. The number of whales reported in each sighting and the reporting source is depicted by graduated symbols. The 50-fathom contour, 100-fathom contour, shipping lanes, and the Cape Cod Bay and Great South Channel Critical Habitats areas are included for reference.

NARWSS TABLE 1

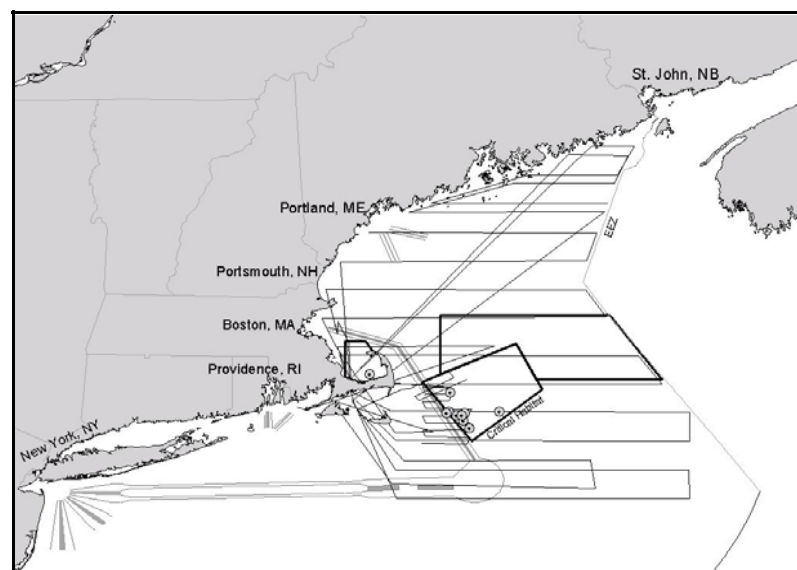
Month in 2004	Flight Hours	Systematic Broadscale Flights *	Systematic Broadscale Series Completed	Critical Habitat Surveys	DAM Surveys	Bombing Range Surveys	# of Right Whales Sighted **
January	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	2	0	0	0	1	0	7
March	27	2	0	1	2	1	20
April	71	9	1	1	2	2	69
May	57	11	1	1	1	0	94
June	84	17	2	0	0	1	73
July	13	1	1	1	0	0	6
August	3	0	0	0	1	0	2
September	29	5	0	0	5	2	4
October	34	5	0	0	2	2	1
November	47	8	1	0	0	0	5
December	30	3	1	0	0	0	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>294</b>

\* Flights that included both systematic broadscale and management survey time were counted as broadscale flights.

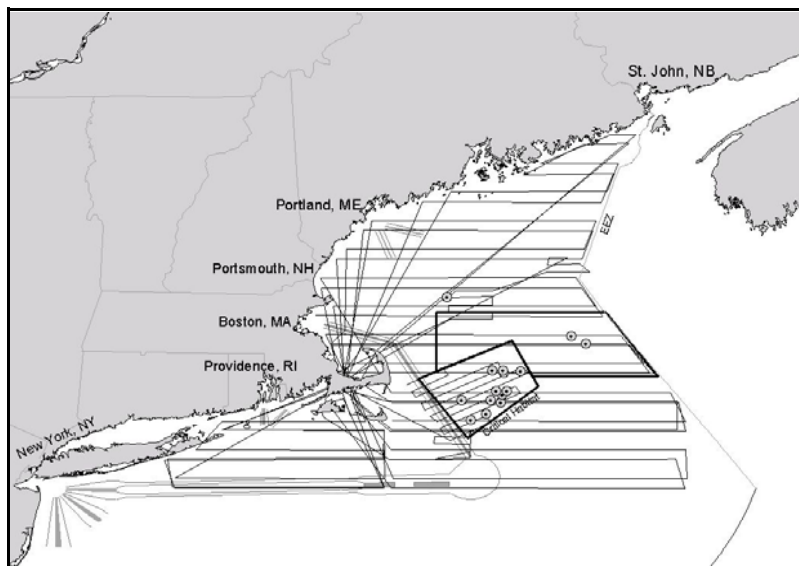
\*\*The number of right whales sighted is a tally of estimated group sizes, not the number of unique individuals identified from photographs.



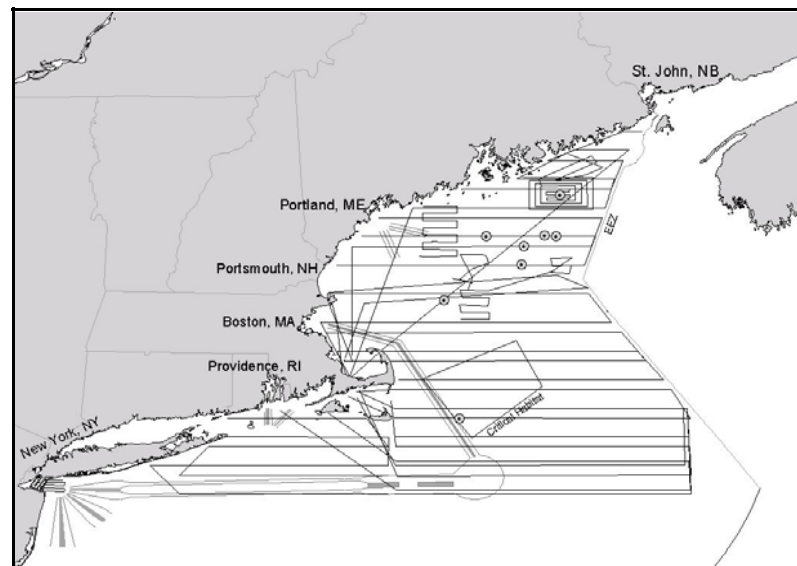
February - April 2004



May 2004



June - July 2004



September - December 2004

NARWSS FIGURE 1

SAS FIGURE 1

Platform	# Of Reports	Unconfirmed	Late
Aerial Survey	60	0	0
Shipboard	39	0	0
Opportunistic	48	5	4
Whale Watch	47	0	3
Coast Guard	15	0	3
Commercial Ship	6	2	1
Fishing Vessel	4	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>

[illegible]

SAS FIGURE 2

